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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2017
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SUBJECT: DEMOCRACY ACTIONS: BAHRAIN

REF: STATE 88465

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe. Reasons: 1.4 (B)(D)

¶1. (C) Per reftel request, Embassy continues to actively promote democracy and democracy-related programs, and the Ambassador, in close coordination with POL and PAS, made this an important theme of his farewell calls and press interviews. Examples:

-- In a prominent, full-page interview June 24 with the Arabic daily Al-Ayam (also published in Al-Ayam's English language sister paper, The Bahrain Tribune), the Ambassador highlighted the U.S. Government's support for participation in parliamentary elections and strengthening the role of parliament, and reaffirmed the USG's support for resuming NDI programming in Bahrain.

-- During a July 11 visit to Bahrain by NDI representatives, the Ambassador accompanied the NDI reps to a key meeting with the leadership of the Bahrain Institute for Political Development to make clear USG support for a return of NDI programming in Bahrain. Despite some critical local press play in the run-up to the visit, the meeting concluded successfully with an agreement to resume NDI programming in Bahrain in the fall.

-- In a July 16 interview with Arabic daily Al-Wasat editor Mansour Al-Jamri the Ambassador addressed the specific issue of support for democracy in general and NDI's programming in particular, generating the headline: "U.S. Ambassador William Monroe says in an interview: Bahrain has benefited from the free trade agreement and has not given up on democratization projects."

-- Also on July 16, the Ambassador paid a farewell call on Shaikh Ali Salman, the leader of the main Shia parliamentary political society Al-Wifaq, which successfully participated in the 2006 parliamentary elections after boycotting the 2002 elections. During the meeting, the Ambassador reaffirmed U.S. support for democracy in Bahrain and reviewed the kinds of MEPI-funded assistance programs the USG has offered in support of democracy, civil society, and the rule of law.

-- On July 18, the Ambassador met with Dr. Abdullah Al Derazi of the Bahrain Human Rights Society to get his take on the democratic process in Bahrain and to affirm USG support for democracy.

-- On July 19, the Ambassador met with Dr. Jassim Al-Ajmi, President of the Bahrain Transparency Society to likewise get his take on democracy developments in the country and affirm USG support for democracy in Bahrain.

¶2. (U) In addition, over the last month, the Embassy has engaged with the following local and international organizations in Bahrain to promote democracy and civil society programming:

-- The Embassy, in conjunction with the MEPI regional office and the Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS), has finalized a statement of work for a small grant project with BHRS to leverage BHRS's annual human rights report to strengthen civic activism and respect for human rights. BHRS will use the grant to increase general public awareness of its findings through a billboard campaign, and will make presentations and share policy recommendations with government officials, members of parliament, and influential members of Bahrain's public.

-- The Embassy, in conjunction with the MEPI regional office and the Migrant Workers Protections Society (MWPS), has approved a draft statement of work for a small grant project with MWPS to organize a national seminar on the rights of foreign laborers and the problem of trafficking-in-persons. MWPS will also conduct a training workshop for civil society representatives and develop a website resource from which to share information on problems experienced by foreign workers and the importance of protecting their rights.

-- Poloff met July 18 with a representative of the Institute of International Education (a MEPI grantee) to discuss and formalize cooperation on a Women in Technology project with representatives of the Bahrain Women's Union and the Aiesha Yateem Center. The project aims to increase the capability of women in the use of computers.

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